



## A Woman's Place

In the late 18th century, Western governments were run by white men who probably couldn't imagine women running for any elected office, let alone the presidency.



**Abigail Adams** was ahead of her time in her advocacy for inclusion. "Remember the ladies," she wrote to her husband, the revolutionary leader John Adams, in March 1776, when he was a delegate to the Continental Congress. She urged that Congress consider the rights of women as it laid the foundations for American independence.

"Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could," she wrote. "If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by

any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

Abigail Adams became the first lady when her husband succeeded George Washington as president in 1797.

Between Abigail Adams' letter and the 2008 campaign of **Hillary Rodham Clinton**, the first politically viable female candidate for president, generations of American women overcame stereotypes and broke down barriers to elected office.

In 1887, **Susanna Madora Salter** was elected mayor of Argonia, Kansas, becoming the first female U.S. mayor only weeks after Kansas women earned voting rights. Some men had nominated the 27-year-old Salter as a joke, but the joke was on them when she won the election.

## Women in Congress

**Jeannette Rankin**, a Republican of Montana, took her seat in the U.S. House of Representatives on April 2, 1916, as the first woman elected to Congress – even before the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 gave all American women the right to vote in elections.

Rankin maintained that women's talents and expertise were needed to build better societies. "Men and women are like right and left hands; it doesn't make sense not to use both," she said.

In 1932, **Hattie Caraway**, initially appointed to fill her late husband's seat, became the first woman elected to the Senate in her own right, representing Arkansas. Nick-



named "silent Hattie" for the rarity of her public speeches, Caraway took her responsibilities seriously and built a reputation for integrity.

**Margaret Chase Smith** represented Maine first in the U.S. House of Representatives and then in the U.S. Senate — the first woman to serve in both chambers of Congress. In 1964, Republican Smith became the first woman considered for the presidential nomination at a national convention; she lost to Barry Goldwater.

Top: Hillary Clinton campaigned for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008. Left: Abigail Adams urged women's rights in 1776. Right: Jeannette Rankin became the first congresswoman.





### National Candidates

**Shirley Chisholm** of New York — the first black woman elected to Congress and a champion of minority rights — campaigned for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972. Chisholm struggled to be taken seriously; newscaster Walter Cronkite announced her candidacy by saying “a new hat — rather, a bonnet — was tossed into the Democratic presidential race today.” Chisholm lost the nomination to George McGovern.

In 1984, **Geraldine Ferraro** campaigned as the Democratic candidate for vice president. In accepting the nomination, the New York representative said, “By choosing a woman to run for our nation’s second highest office, you sent a powerful signal to all Americans. There are no doors we cannot unlock. We will place no limits on achievement.”

When President George W. Bush delivered his State of the Union address in January 2007, the first female speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, **Nancy Pelosi** from San Francisco, sat behind him on the dais. (The speaker is next in line of succession to the presidency after the vice president.)

President Bush called Pelosi’s ascension to the post of speaker “historic for our country. And as the father of young women ... I think it’s important.”

In 2008, **Sarah Palin** became the Republican Party’s first female nominee for vice president.

In June 2008, former first lady **Hillary Rodham Clinton**, a U.S. senator from New York, ended her historic bid for the U.S. presidency. The 18 million primary votes she had won by June were not going to be enough to secure the Democratic nomination.

“Think how much progress we’ve already made,” Clinton told her supporters. “... [F]rom now on it will be unremarkable for a woman to win primary state victories, unremarkable to have a woman in a close race to be our nominee, unremarkable to think that a woman can be the president of the United States.”

Top: Suffragettes march for women’s right to vote in 1912. Second row, left to right: Argonia, Kansas, Mayor Susanna Madora Salter; U.S. Senator Hattie Caraway; U.S. Senator Margaret Chase Smith; U.S. Representative Shirley Chisholm, Representative Geraldine Ferraro; U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi.